

## Teaching philosophy

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As academics, it is often through our role as educators that we can make the most significant impact. While our research can undoubtedly have an effect, it is our teaching that has a broader audience. This became clear to me while holding office hours for my human rights class when one student writing his research paper on Guantanamo Bay asked me "Can I use my personal experience?" I laughed nervously and asked what possible experience he could have. It turns out that he had been a guard at Guantanamo Bay. This man, not much younger than myself, was now sitting in the front row of my class researching the ways in which practices at the prison where he used to work violate the Geneva Conventions.

Higher education provides some of the most critical opportunities for students to cultivate their sense of self, their passions, and develop the skills to be informed agents in a democratic society. As an instructor, I strive to cultivate a sense of global citizenship and civic engagement in my students. I have four main strategies to help facilitate this. First, I keep theoretical material relevant by using real world, contemporary examples of elusive concepts and aim to connect that material to their own lived experiences. Second, I emphasize student choice to encourage them to cultivate a sense of passion and a sense of ownership in their education. Third, I aim to help students develop a stronger ability to concentrate in a world that is filled with a series of distractions. Lastly, I emphasize the importance of respectful social interaction and dialogue.

To accompany these strategies, I aim to be transparent with my students about learning objectives, the long-term value of the skills they are developing, and communicate the rationale behind each type of assessment. I look forward to directly engaging students through hands-on research projects, collaborative groups, simulations, and other interactive methods.

### Global Perspective

The first step in cultivating a sense of global citizenship and civic engagement is through exposure and connecting theory to real-world events. Without practical application, theories can be easily forgotten. More importantly, making the material relevant provides students with the necessary tools and skills to analyze the world around them once they have graduated. In the classroom, I like to bring in news articles into the classroom so that we analyze world events in conjunction with the assigned scholarly work. This approach accomplishes two goals. First, it gives students a chance to practice reading news articles in a critical manner. Additionally, this approach gives students concrete examples of how what they learn applies to various global phenomena. For example, when discussing the definition of state and the importance of state sovereignty, we analyzed a New York Times article about Sweden's declaration to legitimate the Palestinian state. Through this example, groups were able to apply definitions and debate the merits of legitimacy and sovereignty. In other instances, I design essay prompts to respond to in-depth analytical pieces about contemporary events. These types of lessons widen world awareness and foster the skills for critical thinking and reasoning.

## Fostering Passion

Because passion is perhaps the best motivator, I actively incorporate opportunities for student choice in assessments and syllabus design, allowing students to critically engage with the issues that they find to be most compelling. As is often done in graduate-level seminars, when possible, I reserve a week for students to select among two or three relevant subject areas so that they can have a hand in their education. For example, in my Globalization and Politics course, the class could choose two out of three areas: gender, identity, and the environment for their special topics section in the syllabus. In my human rights course, students had the freedom to select any contemporary human rights issue on which to write their final project, allowing them to develop their passions further. One student, who was introduced to the Rohingya protracted refugee crisis in my class, chose to write her paper on the subject given Aung San Suu Kyi's public refusal to condemn atrocities committed towards the Rohingya population in Burma. She has since continued her work on this subject through an internship at the UNHCR. In a thank you note, she writes "I can undoubtedly say that one of the main factors that has impacted me to not only become more alert on what is going on around the world but also in pursuing to become an international human rights lawyer has been your class!" After deliberating for several weeks in my office hours, another student eventually chose the subject of prisoners' human rights for her paper. She is now studying for the LSAT in hopes of contributing to criminal justice reform. Selecting a topic to which they feel connected helps foster new passions and then channel these passions into productive and critical endeavors.

## Fostering confidence through concentration

Distractions inside and out of the classroom often seem inevitable, but there are essential ways to make sure that distractions are not detrimental. Between the need for students to work to cover expenses and the distraction of devices, there are many opportunities for students to lose focus and interest. In my classroom, I gear my assessments and in-class activities to foster concentration, which in turn can give students a boost of confidence. For example, as a teaching assistant for introductory and upper division political theory courses, I became frustrated with students who did not appear to do the reading. After discussing with my students, I found that those who had attempted the reading were having difficulties understanding it. Others had been too intimidated to read past the first page. In my sections, I compiled close-reading worksheets for critical passages that they complete in groups. Students have praised these worksheets as they help show students how to read difficult passages and give them the time to concentrate on the reading, all while giving them the tools and confidence to continue the work on their own. In my other classes, I have also adopted close reading assignments for students to complete online, and in their own time, for more complicated materials, such as journal articles and book chapters. They include a combination of reading comprehension, inference, and organizational questions.

## Learning through social interaction

Lastly, I recognize that liberal learning is an iterative and interactive process that requires respectful and diverse social interaction. It is only through this kind of communication that we can continue to learn from each other and get a better understanding of our experiences actively

shape our global outlook and motivations to be engaged citizens. When students are exposed to world events, have the freedom to delve into the issues that spark passion, and can concentrate and feel confident in their new abilities, they are likely to be more informed and motivated. In the classroom, I strive to create respectful spaces for dialogue and conversation by posing discussion questions to small groups or include more structured class debates. In my Globalization summer course, I raised discussion questions online and had students respond to the question as well as other students' responses. I found that students were more thoughtful, careful, and less afraid to express their thoughts in an online forum. These are just some ways that I strive to facilitate student-centered learning.

### Engaging Students through hands-on learning

In the future, I hope to develop further as an instructor and a mentor by finding new ways to include students on my research projects, either by mentoring research assistants, overseeing independent studies, or creating “research teams” of students interested in subjects tangentially related to my agenda. My most memorable opportunity as an undergraduate was when my undergraduate thesis advisor included me in his ethnographic research project with the local Oaxacan migrant community, to better understand transnational migrant experiences. These are the kinds of innovative opportunities I would like to create for my future students. These interactive and guided learning experiences develop new spaces for diverse social interaction, cultivating passion and critical thinking, and fostering concentration and focus.